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Friday, 9 March 2007, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Kumalo	(South Africa)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Belle
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Congo	Mr. Gayama
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Ghana	Nana Effah-Apenteng
	Indonesia	Mr. Kleib
	Italy	Mr. Mantovani
	Panama	Mr. Arias
	Peru	Mr. Voto-Bernales
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Ansari
	Russian Federation	Mr. Leplinskiy
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Mr. McBride

Agenda

The situation in the Great Lakes region

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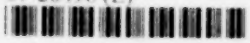

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Great Lakes region

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Ibrahima Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Fall to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

The Security Council will now hear a briefing by Mr. Ibrahima Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Fall (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to thank you, Sir, for inviting me to participate in this meeting. I also thank your country for the important role it has played and continues to play in stabilizing and bringing peace to the Great Lakes region. During my four-and-a-half year tenure, which ends in a few days, I have enjoyed the unswerving support and wise counsel of your Government.

I also need to thank the Republic of South Africa for the important political and diplomatic role it has played and continues to play in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other parts of the region. The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region would not have been a success if the peace processes in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo had not also proceeded smoothly. Once again, I thank you. Your presidency of the Security Council this month and the convening of this meeting are further testimony to South Africa's commitment.

On 20 December 2006, in the wake of the Nairobi summit of 14 and 15 December — which represented the culmination of the preparatory process for the International Conference, adopting the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region — the Security Council decided to hold a meeting to hear the conclusions emanating from that important summit. On the basis of the Council's conclusions, an additional and final three-month mandate was given to the Office that I have the honour to head in order to ensure a harmonious transition between the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region and the Executive Secretariat of the Conference established at the Nairobi summit.

I will brief the Security Council today on the basis of two themes. The first is the process of transferring competencies from the Office of the Special Representative to the Executive Secretariat of the Conference, which has been under way since 1 January. I will then try very briefly to outline the lessons learned from the experience of preparing for the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

With respect to the transfer of competencies, in accordance with the statement issued by the Council on 20 December 2006, we have been working since 1 January with Ambassador Mulamula, Executive Secretary of the Conference, to undertake the transfer from my Office to the Executive Secretariat. In that context, we have worked in three areas.

First, we transferred the institutional memory of the preparatory process for the International Conference. We assembled and transferred all of the documents drafted from June 2003 to March 2006. The transfer is now complete and we are simply waiting for the Executive Secretariat to acquire the necessary facilities in Bujumbura to allow it to finalize the transfer of the documents in hard copy and electronic versions.

Secondly, we assisted in the establishment of the new Executive Secretariat. That primarily involved the drafting and adoption of management, legal, administrative and financial manuals. We then assisted the Executive Secretary in drafting and preparing the headquarters agreement with the Government of Burundi. In the same vein, we helped the Executive Secretary in her other efforts with respect to the Government of Kenya, which holds the Conference presidency. Even as I speak, the Minister for Foreign

Affairs of Kenya is hosting his counterparts at a meeting of the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee, to which I will refer again later.

Thirdly, we assisted the Executive Secretary in implementing the recruitment of consultants to the Executive Secretariat for the transition period. As Council members know, the Executive Secretariat does not yet have any real budget. We also helped the Executive Secretary to convene a number of meetings and organized a meeting of national coordinators to adopt the Executive Secretariat's management manuals. We further assisted the Executive Secretary and the Association of European Parliamentarians for Africa in organizing in Kinshasa a regional meeting for parliamentarians of the Great Lakes region. That meeting succeeded, first, in terms of the attendance of representatives of all countries of the region, including a number of delegations led by speakers of senates or houses; and secondly, in adopting a declaration and a report in which the parliamentarians undertook to assist in the prompt ratification and speedy implementation of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region adopted at the Nairobi summit.

We are currently assisting the Executive Secretariat in preparing and organizing a meeting of the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee for the Great Lakes region, a body established under the Conference. The meeting is to be held in Bujumbura on 22 and 23 March.

Lastly, we are working with the Executive Secretary to prepare for a meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union to be held on 13 March in Addis Ababa, which will focus specifically on assessing the preparatory process for the Conference and the joint role played by the African Union and the United Nations.

We therefore believe that, as of 31 March, the transfer of competencies will have been carried out in its entirety. In that respect, at our suggestion the Executive Secretary has written a letter to the Secretary-General requesting that all of the equipment from the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General be transferred as a donation to the new Executive Secretariat of the Conference. The Secretary-General, with whom I met yesterday, is monitoring this request very closely and has issued guidance so that a positive and rapid response may be given to him.

Perhaps the time has now come to try to draw some lessons from this entire preparatory process. The first lesson to be drawn is clearly the importance of the role of the Security Council in the preparatory process and, as a result, the importance of the role that the Council should play in the implementation of the Pact.

Throughout the preparatory process, the Office of the Special Representative has received diplomatic and political support from the Council here in New York and in the field. This support could have been more effective if it had been accompanied by support in terms of staff recruitment. The Council preferred to maintain the Office's staffing at the skeletal level. Without the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which backed us up with two officers, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), which provided an officer, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which also seconded one person, the Office of Special Representative of the Secretary-General would not have been in the position to carry out its function of facilitating the preparatory process.

It is essential that the Council acknowledge the consequences. The Council cannot issue a mandate as important as organizing an international conference on the Great Lakes region that includes 11 countries — and the Council had insisted that the conference be expanded to 11 countries — without providing the resources necessary to complete the task.

The second lesson to be drawn is to look into the future with respect to the Council's role. It is important that the process of ratifying the Pact be done as soon as possible. I will come back to this point. But the Council needs to support and accompany this ratification process in order that it take place as quickly as possible. The region is still fragile. The Conference process has created an atmosphere of trust, but this atmosphere is tenuous and, without prompt ratification and rapid implementation of this Pact, it could deteriorate at any moment. Therefore, I urge the Council to use its moral authority to support and boost prompt ratification of this Pact.

The third lesson to be drawn is one concerning the member countries. The preparatory process was built on three principles — the principle of ownership, the principle of inclusion and the principle of partnerships.

The principle of ownership is essential. Today, more than ever, the countries of the region need to effectively exercise their ownership of the process, which, beyond establishment of the secretariat, encompasses the rapid ratification of the Pact, the payment of assessments to the regular budget for the secretariat and the creation of the Special Fund for Reconstruction and Development.

This political commitment was reaffirmed by the heads of State, but it is essential that the commitment be confirmed by action. To date, only two countries have paid their assessments to the Conference secretariat. Furthermore, with respect to ratification, the Office of the Special Representative is not yet aware of any State having ratified the Pact. It is therefore essential that this primary responsibility of countries of the region be highlighted, and for that I also call here on the Council's authority.

It is essential that the priorities adopted by the Conference with regard to programmes of action and protocols be implemented effectively. On this point, there are number of key projects, some of which have received financing upstream. That is the case with reviving the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries, for which the European Union has already committed to contributing $5 million for relaunching the secretariat and $45 million for project implementation.

As we know, the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries includes the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi, that is to say that, together with Uganda, it is a circle of fire, the most unstable part of Great Lakes region. Thus is urgent that these projects be quickly implemented.

Similarly, the Pact also laid out transborder areas of development and established border areas for shared management of border problems. Here again, the Conference could anticipate implementation, particularly by drawing on an already existing initiative, namely, the Tripartite Plus One initiative, which includes the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda, under the authority of the United States of America. It is essential that, as in the work of the preparatory process for the Conference with the authorities in Washington, there be better synergy between the Tripartite Plus One and the projects of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region with respect to transborder zones involving those four countries.

Lastly, it is essential to maintain the momentum from the Conference. For that, during the Security Council's periodic visits to the region, particular importance needs to be given to implementation of the Pact. That could also draw upon peacekeeping missions that the Council has decided upon, specifically, with regard to the Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi.

Moreover, I should say that, with respect to the Conference, the principle of inclusiveness needs to be maintained. That means giving non-governmental players, particularly women and young people and civil society, but also parliamentarians, the possibility to take part in the process of implementing the Pact. The Pact, if it is properly applied, could provide an example of a regional, comprehensive approach that could be duplicated in some other regions in Africa or elsewhere because, from experience, we know that this kind of regional comprehensive approach, bringing together peace and security, democracy and good governance, economic development and regional integration, is the only likely way to tackle all of the problems of human security in a comprehensive manner.

Mr. President, I conclude by saying to you, with a sense of pride, what a privilege and honour it has been for me to serve both the United Nations and Africa through this preparation for the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

The President: I thank Mr. Fall for his briefing. I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make comments or ask questions in response to the briefing we have just heard.

Nana Effah-Apenteng (Ghana): At the outset, let me thank Mr. Ibrahima Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, for his briefing and commend him for the good work he has been doing, which has contributed immensely to peace, security and development in that region. On behalf of my delegation, I would like to extend our best wishes to him in his next assignment after the end of this month, when the mandate of his current assignment expires.

Barely three months ago, this Council had the opportunity to congratulate the Governments and

people of the Great Lakes region on their signing the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in that region and called upon the regional leaders to commit themselves to the implementation of all aspects of that agreement. It was the hope of the Council that the signing of the Pact would turn the region from a state of desolation engendered by a long period of instability, violent conflict, insecurity, carnage, widespread violation of fundamental human rights and underdevelopment into a state of sustainable peace, security and socio-economic development.

In this connection, we are encouraged that a regional parliamentary meeting of the Great Lakes region, which took place in Kinshasa, supported the Pact, which was signed at the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region in December 2006 in Nairobi. We are also delighted to note that the parliamentarians acknowledged their role in contributing to the early ratification and implementation of the Great Lakes regional peace pact. This entire process will also require the sensitization of the people, as well as strengthening relations between civil society, Governments and parliaments.

The parliamentarians of the Great Lakes region also committed themselves to establishing a regional parliamentary forum in order to encourage dialogue and to contribute to the mobilization of internal and external resources for the implementation of the programme. It is important to heed the call for States to honour their financial contributions to the budget of the secretariat of the Great Lakes if the Pact is to succeed.

While commending the efforts of the legislators in moving the process of ratification and implementation of the Pact a step forward, it is worthwhile to mention that all of these good intentions require the commitment and political will of the regional leaders to succeed. The leaders should rise above their national and sectional interests and put the interests of the Great Lakes region first. The parliamentarians must see themselves as uniquely placed to encourage their respective member States to harmonize their national legislation for the implementation of the various protocols.

Regional ownership of the process is essential for peace and sustainable development of the region. A key element of full ownership of this endeavour will require joint and coordinated efforts of neighbouring countries and regional institutions. The regional leaders should also endeavour to convert the Conference into a regional peacebuilding forum for the prevention, management and peaceful settlement of conflicts.

In view of the current unstable situation in eastern Congo and northern Uganda, there is an urgent need for leaders of the Great Lakes region to cooperate on cross-border security and trade, with the aim of spurring development after decades of civil conflict. Dialogue should become the only medium for resolving conflicts.

For its part, the international community should continue to monitor closely the peace talks between the Government and rebel groups in Uganda and support the implementation of the outcome of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, especially as demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants are seen as crucial in the efforts toward the region's progress in the areas of good governance and economic recovery.

In this regard, we commend the rebel groups in eastern Congo for agreeing to disarm, and we urge the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to intensify its efforts at retraining ex-combatants and reintegrating them into the national armed forces. The international community should complement these efforts by supporting regional peacebuilding projects that address the plight of returnees, stem the flow of small arms and light weapons, check the activities of mercenaries in the region, promote demining techniques and curb the illegal exploitation and illicit trading of natural resources.

Finally, we commend the international community, including the joint United Nations-African Union (AU) secretariat and its team of experts, led by the Secretary-General's Special Representative and the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region, for their contribution to the successful completion of the two conferences in December 2006 and February 2007. We also support the recommendation of the regional parliamentary meeting for the Great Lakes region that the international community, notably the United Nations and the AU, continue their support for peace and reconstruction of the Great Lakes region.

Mr. Belle (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I would like to thank you for organizing this informational meeting on a region in the heart of Africa that is dear to Belgium. I would also like to

thank Mr. Fall, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for the briefing he has just given us.

Last December, the Security Council had an opportunity to congratulate the countries of the Great Lakes region for having brought to a positive conclusion the second summit of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, held in Nairobi on 15 December 2006. The Council also congratulated the countries for having signed the Pact on Security, Stability and Development for the Great Lakes Region on that occasion.

The adoption of this Pact was preceded by, and was made possible by, particularly positive developments in the region. In August 2005, Burundi entered a new era. On 6 December 2006, the Democratic Republic of the Congo placed President Kabila in office following elections that put an end to a lengthy transitional period. In Uganda, discussions with the Lord's Resistance Army are under way. And, finally, we have seen considerable progress in Rwanda in recent years.

These developments are, first of all, the result of the efforts and the tenacity shown by the people of the region themselves, supported in these efforts by the international community. It is now crucial for the commitments undertaken to be truly implemented.

In the first place, we need to ensure that the regional follow-up mechanism — a secretariat headed by Ms. Liberata Mulamula, Executive Secretary — becomes fully operational. Setting up the secretariat in Bujumbura will make it possible for the United Nations and the African Union (AU) to hand this task over to the member countries of the Conference. For the secretariat to be truly operational, it is important for the countries of the region to provide it solid assistance, supported in that by donors. Belgium, for its part, is prepared to consider support.

Secondly, the Pact on Security, Stability and Development must be ratified in all countries of the region. Mr. Fall has just reminded us of how important that ratification is. In this respect, my delegation welcomes the holding of the regional parliamentary meeting on the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. That meeting, held from 26 to 28 February in Kinshasa was co-organized by the Association of European Parliamentarians for Africa (AWEPA) and co-financed by my country Belgium hopes that this meeting will help speed up the ratification process to which I have just referred.

Finally, it is important for the Special Fund for Reconstruction and Development that the implementation of the Pact become fully operational so that this Fund may fulfil its role. Each of the 11 member States must comply with their commitments and provide funding. For its part, Belgium is prepared to consider contributions to specific financing mechanisms for projects and contributions as well to the Special Fund for Reconstruction and Development, once the Fund has been declared operational by the African Development Bank. For my country, the programme of action for peace and stability and the confidence-building measures are particularly important, as is the protocol to combat the illegal exportation of natural resources.

I would also like to underline the importance of greater regional integration among the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi. We believe that the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (ECGLC) has an important role to play in this regard through establishing greater regional integration among countries that have had to deal with dire situations but that are now called upon to work together to accelerate the economic and social progress that their people expect.

The relaunch of ECGLC will provide support for the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region agreed at the International Conference, which provides for cross-border security and development in eastern Congo, Rwanda and Burundi. The ECGLC will also provide support for other integration efforts already under way in the region, in particular the East African Community and the Economic Community of Central African States. Finally, it can provide a framework for cooperation in the areas of energy, regional development and agriculture. Belgium hopes that a ministerial meeting of ECGLC will take place in April in Bujumbura, thereby re-launching that important instrument.

I could not conclude without expressing warm thanks to Mr. Ibrahima Fall for his tireless efforts in support of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region throughout his mandate.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I, too, would like to thank Mr. Ibrahima Fall for his briefing. As his tenure will soon be coming to an end, I

would also like to thank him for the excellent job that he has done as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region. We know how closely he has been working with the African Union with a view to facilitating the Conference process.

The signing in Nairobi of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region provided new impetus to cooperation efforts among the countries of the Great Lakes region. Such regional cooperation is an essential component of the internal stabilization process that a number of countries in the region have had to undertake — a process that, for some, is still under way.

As my delegation has already emphasized, we believe that in this context two aspects are particularly important. The first is security. As this is a cross-border problem, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region opens a special framework within which to seek solutions. The problem of security continues to be relevant, although it is less pressing today than in the past, which is a welcome development.

The second aspect is economic relationships. Each country in the region will be able to develop in a sustainable manner only if it can do so in the context of a regional economic framework that is stable and balanced. That requires strengthened economic cooperation and the transparent and mutually beneficial management of the natural resources of the region.

I would like to welcome the determination of the States of the region to work together to overcome their common challenges. Such regional efforts must continue. To that end, the States parties to the International Conference for the Great Lakes Region must take ownership of that new instrument. Ownership is a prerequisite for the success of the process undertaken at Dar es-Salaam and Nairobi. I therefore welcome the decision of the States parties to the Conference to seek to continue and enhance the process under way through the implementation of regional monitoring mechanisms.

The international community, and the United Nations in particular, will remain committed, together with the Great Lakes region, to contributing to the success of the process. The Security Council will soon have an opportunity to reconsider the mandate of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo with a view to adapting it to the post-transition context. The Peacebuilding Commission will provide support for reconstruction and development efforts in Burundi. More broadly, the United Nations system will, we hope, remain deeply committed to the region, for which is has spared no efforts.

Mr. Kleib (Indonesia): I would like to begin by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Ibrahima Fall, for his final briefing on the situation in the area. I would like to commend him for a job well done since he assumed his duties as Special Representative.

It is with satisfaction that one can say that the situation in the Great Lakes region has improved to a great extent when compared with that of just a few years ago, when the international community tended to regard the area as a byword for spiralling violence, humanitarian chaos and social tragedy.

Indeed, before our very eyes, almost all of the countries in the region have successfully emerged from conflict and are on a steady and sound path towards economic and social development. Over the past few years there has been steady progress in the areas of peace, security and democratization. That is a remarkable achievement, and Indonesia is pleased to commend all of the nations and peoples of the Great Lakes region for their efforts and their determination to create the foundation for lasting peace and progress.

My delegation is of the view that the convening of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region last December, followed by the signing of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region, is the culmination of efforts to establish durable peace, security, stability and sustainable development in the area. It is now time to translate those aspirations into a concrete programme of projects and plans.

In that regard, it should be noted that there are still some outstanding issues to be addressed by the countries of the region. These include combating the illegal exploitation of natural resources and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, addressing humanitarian and human rights issues, supporting institution-building, strengthening the rule of law and advancing good governance.

The signing of the Pact, as well as the creation of the Conference secretariat, will also bring the countries

in the region to the level of the new regional ownership concept. This approach is in line with Security Council resolution 1653 (2006), which, inter alia, urged countries in the region to develop a subregional approach for promoting good relations, peaceful coexistence and the peaceful resolution of disputes.

Finally, my delegation would also like to appeal to donor countries, as well as to United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, to consider providing necessary assistance to the Conference secretariat and the Special Fund for Reconstruction and Development in support of the implementation of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region.

We have travelled very far with the Governments and the peoples of what was once a very difficult region. With the finish line in sight, we must do everything necessary to help the people to complete this remarkable and irreversible journey.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like first of all to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ibrahima Fall, for his briefing. We would like to express our gratitude to him for his tireless efforts over the past few years to assist the Great Lakes region. I would also like to express my best wishes to him.

We are pleased to note the recent important progress in the peace process in the region. Countries there have gradually emerged from the shadow of conflict and are actively carrying out post-conflict reconstruction. The second summit of the International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region and the meeting of regional parliamentarians were successfully completed. The signing of the Stability, Security and Development Pact for the region is an indication of the new important progress by the countries to resolve conflicts themselves and to make joint efforts towards economic development.

We believe that through dialogue and consultation, the countries of the region can seek appropriate solutions to the issues and make further efforts to consolidate good-neighbourly relations. We hope that the International Conference can continue to provide a platform for the countries of the region to carry out constructive dialogue and cooperation, so as bring about lasting peace and stability in the region soon as possible.

Peacebuilding efforts in the region cannot be carried out without the support of the international community. The international community should continue to monitor the countries in the region emerging from conflict, as well as to increase its economic assistance to them and help them in capacity-building. As a friend of all the countries of the region, China will, in the framework of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, continue to strengthen its multidimensional cooperation with those countries in order to make an active contribution to the achievement of lasting peace, stability, and development in the region.

Finally, China would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the African Union and the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region for their contributions to peace and stability in the region.

Mr. Gayama (Congo) (*spoke in French*): As my country is one of the 11 that make up the Great Lakes region in the larger sense that Mr. Ibrahima Fall mentioned, it is on behalf of all those countries — my own, of course, but also those represented in the Chamber, including those whose representatives are seated at the side of the Council Chamber as well as those whose representatives are currently away from New York — that I would like today to express our gratitude to Mr. Ibrahima Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his professionalism and commitment in carrying out his duties, which consisted in establishing community institutions for the Great Lakes region. We thank him most sincerely for that.

As Mr. Fall concludes his mission, it can be said that the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region is now a reality. It is indeed a fragile institution and must for that reason be strengthened — specifically, by ensuring that the countries of the region assume ownership for the mechanisms that have been established. That is a requirement that must first be met before the support of the international community can continue. The countries of the region should send a clear message as to their commitment to the important tool for peace and development that they have now established.

The ratification of the Stability, Security and Development Pact then becomes a key and indispensable requirement. Generally speaking, that ownership can move from dream to the reality that, in

all countries of the region, Governments and peoples have always called for, namely, peace and development.

The Great Lakes region is of key importance, not just for Africa but also for the world. That region is where one finds the Congo River Basin, which, after the Amazon, is the world's second largest ecological lung, as it were. The region is also home to established institutions operating to some degree or other. To a certain extent, those institutions constitute the fabric of the region. I am referring to the Economic Community of Central African States, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa and the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries, whose reactivation is called for by all those concerned about improving the situation in the region.

The international community has therefore rightly called the Great Lakes region a special reconstruction and development area. We therefore believe that it is urgent that the Community's secretariat be able to function properly. The indispensable support of the international community must be channelled through the secretariat and its member countries in order to ensure that the entire structure can operate.

With regard to institutional coherence, it is being developed on the basis of the genuine cultural unity that exists in the region. That is evident in the major languages utilized in the region, namely, Swahili and Lingala, among others. That will undoubtedly contribute to an inclusive approach, in which we believe civil society will be the primary participant and beneficiary. It is for that reason that we welcome the commitment undertaken by parliamentarians of the region meeting recently in Kinshasa with a view, primarily, to ratifying the Pact.

There is no doubt that many factors are contributing to fragility in the region, especially given that all the elements of peace have not yet been fully consolidated. The sad reality is that small arms are circulating freely. Among others, that situation benefits all those who illegally exploit the vast natural resources of the region. Fragility is also evident in the fact that there is still mistrust among the members of the region, and that mistrust must be eliminated. The region therefore still needs the international community.

In that connection, we think that the role of the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region will continue to be welcomed for some time to come. We support the idea of the Organization's continuing to provide cooperation to the regional secretariat in technical and material terms and in every possible way.

We know that the United Nations is now very much involved throughout the region. It has been working in Burundi, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and countries adjacent to the region, particularly the Sudan, Chad and the Central African Republic. But the United Nations has not done only that. In Central Africa, it has also long promoted the activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, which some time ago signed a non-aggression pact bringing together many countries, particularly members of the Economic Community of Central African States. All of that reflects the historic United Nations commitment to this region, whose recovery will be a very important step for Africa as a whole.

That is why, at this point, it would be good if the Security Council could define, or seek to encourage the Secretariat to define, all support modalities that the United Nations can provide to the Great Lakes region — mindful, obviously, of lessons learned from experience, such as those succinctly referred to by Mr. Ibrahima Fall.

Mr. McBride (United States of America): I want to thank Special Representative Fall for his briefing. The United States joins the others in this Chamber in thanking him for four years of leadership in the Great Lakes region.

Over the past decade, this resource-rich region in the heart of Africa has suffered from wrenching, destabilizing conflicts that have produced almost unimaginable suffering. Today the situation remains fragile and the challenges remain immense, but the prospects for peace and development have improved, in part because of the attention of the international community, but even more so because of the will and efforts of the people in the region to overcome these setbacks.

The transition in Burundi and the historic elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are among a number of encouraging developments. We have all noted that a spirit of trust and cooperation is growing among the States in the region. The Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region, signed in Nairobi on 15 December 2006 by

11 African States, was a promising conclusion to the United Nations-sponsored International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. This agreement has the potential to become a means of preventing future conflicts in Central Africa, while offering a road map for consolidating democracy, good governance and development.

We join others in encouraging the States in the region to live up to their commitments, to respect national sovereignty, to seek the peaceful settlement of disputes and to cooperate to strengthen the economies of the region. That is a vision that cannot be imposed; regional ownership of this process is vital.

Bilateral agreements and other regional efforts can and should complement this process. We would note, in that regard, one initiative that my country has facilitated: the Tripartite Plus Joint Commission, which is aimed at promoting security and stability in and among the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi. We are confident that those countries, which are also signatories to the Nairobi Pact, will fulfil their commitments to enhance cooperation for peace among Commission members.

Mr. Leplinskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation expresses its gratitude to Mr. Ibrahima Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, for his substantive briefing. Progress in the peace process in the Great Lakes region would not have been possible without the active involvement of the Office of the Special Representative and the African Union. Together with the regional secretariat, they have made much progress in terms of organizing the Dar es-Salaam and Nairobi summits.

Today's meeting attests eloquently to the attention that the Security Council is devoting to the situation in the Great Lakes region. We are pleased to note encouraging developments. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has held its first democratic elections in four decades. Peacebuilding efforts are under way in Burundi, whose problems are on the agenda of the recently established Peacebuilding Commission. Issues related to northern Uganda are being gradually addressed; peacebuilding measures have been elaborated and are being carried out. Multilateral security mechanisms involving the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi are being implemented. Clearly, none of that would have been possible without the assistance of subregional organizations, partner countries, donors and international financial institutions.

A critical event last year was the signing by heads of State of the Great Lakes region, at Nairobi in December 2006, of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region, which ushered in a new era of post-conflict rehabilitation and social development. The primary task for participants in the International Conference, now and in the near future, will be to ratify the Pact and to begin the progressive implementation of decisions taken and arrangements agreed.

On 31 March the mandate of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region will conclude. The Special Representative, Mr. Fall, and his staff have done a great job and deserve the highest praise. Let me also take this opportunity to express our gratitude to all those who have assisted and will continue to assist the Great Lakes region in seeking to achieve lasting peace, stability and economic progress: the United Republic of Tanzania, South Africa, the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region, the regional Preparatory Committee and the National Coordinators.

Mr. Mantovani (Italy): First of all, I would like to thank as our partner the Special Representative, Ambassador Fall, for his comprehensive and detailed briefing and for his tireless work in these years of valuable changes for the Great Lakes region.

I wish to commend the positive developments in the region, such as the successful and peaceful conclusion of the electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the efforts of Burundi in the peacebuilding process, the achievement of stabilization in Rwanda and the positive achievement of the Nairobi Conference in December.

The Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region, adopted in Nairobi, is a fundamental starting point towards establishing lasting peace and sustainable development. However, we remain concerned about the human rights situation and the important issue of the illegal exploitation of natural resources, which affect the economic perspective and sustainable development of the whole region. At the same time, we would like to express our concerns about the stalemate in the Juba peace talks and the continuing threat that the Lord's Resistance Army

poses to the peace and stability of the whole Great Lakes region.

Good governance and the fight against corruption are important pillars of the follow-up to the Great Lakes Conference. It would be interesting for us if Ambassador Fall could elaborate further on measures to be taken in that field by the countries involved.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I, too, would like to join others in welcoming the Special Representative here today, thanking him for his briefing, and also to express our appreciation for his service and commitment to the work he has been doing and to the work of his team.

May I begin by underlining my own country's commitment to security, stability and development in the Great Lakes region. In support of those goals, we are providing approximately $1 billion in bilateral development and humanitarian programmes in the region, and we will continue to sustain a substantial effort, bilaterally and through the European Union.

As other representatives have said this morning, the signature of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development at the Great Lakes summit in December 2006 was a historic moment. It is a significant opportunity to move towards lasting peace in the region. We strongly urge, therefore, that the leaders of the Great Lakes region press ahead with implementation of the Pact. We hope that the new Executive Secretariat, under the most able leadership of Ambassador Mulamula of Tanzania, will be established in Bujumbura in the near future.

The challenges that the countries and people of the region face are shared, and the solutions must be shared too. We will play our part in helping to resolve them.

So much of what has happened in the region in recent years is linked to events in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is an important aspect of the Security Council's work. We were awe-inspired by the determined efforts made by the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to overcome the catastrophic effects of conflict and to move forward, through democratic elections, to a secure and better future. They deserve our praise and our help for what they have achieved.

The United Nations, too, deserves our congratulations for its part in that achievement. We look forward to receiving the Secretary-General's recommendations next week on the future role that the United Nations can play in helping the elected Congolese authorities meet the needs and aspirations of the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Security Council should, in our view, also continue to monitor closely progress in the peace talks between the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army, which uses the Garamba National Park in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as its base. That conflict has driven more than 2 million people from their homes and, while some of those have begun to return, stability on the ground in northern Uganda remains fragile. The United Kingdom welcomes the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, former President Chissano, to find a negotiated solution, and we hope and believe that the Security Council will lend its strong vocal support to his efforts.

Finally, may I urge the countries of the region to join us in and add their weight to efforts to address urgently the worsening crisis in the Darfur region of the Sudan, one of the signatories of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development. It is sobering to note that, just as the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi and elsewhere in the region are beginning to experience the rewards and opportunities that peace brings, their neighbours in Darfur are being denied the most basic means of survival.

Mr. Burian (Slovakia): We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Fall for his briefing, and would like to join other Council members in congratulating him and other members of his team on their commendable work carried out during his term in office, including the preparation and organization of the Second International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region.

We agree with the observation made by Mr. Fall that the momentum and positive atmosphere created by the outcomes of the summit should be maintained and utilized to strengthen regional cooperation through the implementation of the decisions of the Conference and to strengthen peace and democratization processes in the countries of the region. The signing of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region is an important step for building trust and confidence in the region, and should be fully supported

and followed up by the speedy implementation of its provisions.

We congratulate the countries of the region on establishing the Conference Executive Secretariat in Bujumbura and the Special Fund for Reconstruction and Development in the Great Lakes Region. We express our hope that they will become fully operational as soon as possible. We believe that the international community must continue to provide full support and assistance in that area, and we share the concern expressed by Mr. Fall that the positive atmosphere of trust that has been created could quickly evaporate if we do not manage to carry through the decisions and outcomes of the International Conference and strengthen regional confidence and cooperation.

In that regard, it is crucial for the countries of the region to assume full ownership of the process, including by paying their assessments to the budget. We agree with Mr. Fall that a successful project of regional cooperation in the Great Lakes region can positively influence developments in other parts of the African continent, serving as a source of inspiration for others to follow.

Nevertheless, despite all the positive developments in the region, we remain concerned about several pockets of instability in the area. In particular, we are deeply concerned about the situation regarding the peace negotiations with the Lord's Resistance Army. The stalemate in the peace negotiations and the inability to extend the truce have returned us to the situation that prevailed in northern Uganda and the surrounding region a year ago. Unless we proceed quickly and resolutely on that issue, we may miss the best opportunity for peace in Uganda that has emerged in 20 years. In that regard, we look forward to the visit of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Lord's Resistance Army-affected areas, Joaquim Chissano, to New York later this month and to hearing his ideas on how the Security Council can help to reinvigorate the peace process.

Mr. Al-Ansari (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to thank Mr. Ibrahima Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, for his briefing. I wish him every success following the end of his tenure this month.

I commend the special attention that the Secretary-General has paid to the Great Lakes region; his field visits to certain countries there upon assuming his office; his attendance at the summit of the African Union in Addis Ababa in late January; and the important meetings he held at the margins of the summit with representatives of important countries of the Great Lakes region.

We recall Security Council resolution 1653 (2006), adopted following the First International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region, held in Dar es-Salaam in 2004. We also recall the conclusions and declaration adopted at the Second Conference, held in Nairobi in 2006, which resulted in the signing of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region by the regional heads of State. The Security Council adopted a presidential statement supporting the summit and endorsing its results following the open debate held on 20 December 2006, under my delegation's presidency. We look forward to the ratification of the Pact so that its practical implementation can begin.

One of the tangible positive steps taken by the second Conference is the establishment of regional follow-up and monitoring mechanisms through the establishment of the secretariat in Bujumbura. We pay special attention to the need for payment of the assessed contributions to the secretariat in order to ensure its smooth functioning. Its work will include the promotion of all stakeholders and actors in civil society and dealing with some of the main questions in the Great Lakes region, including those pertaining to women, youth, reform of the security sector and exploitation of natural resources in the region.

It will be extremely important, in this regard, to set priorities in implementation. We appreciate the role of the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region and urge it to continue to play its role in the implementation of the Pact. We also urge all international partners to continue their positive involvement, particularly after the decision of the Great Lakes region to establish a trust fund for that purpose. That means there will be an appropriate mechanism to give the necessary support.

We must not lose sight of the fact that there is a need to implement previous resolutions of the Security Council, which are extremely important to the countries of the Great Lakes region, particularly those pertaining the prevention of conflicts, assessment of the problem of armed groups and violations of human

rights, as well as ways and means to preserve peace and security in the region and solving the problems of displaced persons and refugees in the region.

In this regard, we note particularly the implementation of resolutions 1625 (2005), 1631 (2005), 1649 (2005), 1653 (2006), which, we believe, will be a very important factor in ensuring the success of the mechanisms established by the Great Lakes region. Implementation will constitute a connection between the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union.

We also believe there is a need to benefit from the role of other international regional and subregional organizations in order to find means to deal with the problems of the region. The Peacebuilding Commission's discharge of its mandate in the region will have a direct and positive influence on the resolution of the problems of the African continent as a whole.

Fully aware of the challenges facing us, we believe that sustainable development will not be achieved without good governance and assured and adequate sources of income, which can be achieved only through security and stability. Security and stability cannot be achieved, in turn, without clear cooperation among the countries and the peoples of the region and the support of the international community as a whole. That will facilitate the conclusion of transparent economic accords between the countries of the region and international financial institutions. Those accords and agreements must be based on a clear understanding of the socio-economic situation in those countries and the cancellation of their foreign debt, or at least the amelioration of their debt situation.

Projects that are founded on sound economic and financial bases must also be established, particularly in view of the strategic location of the region on the continent of Africa and its immense natural resources.

We also would like to reiterate the need for regional ownership of all programmes and projects carried out in the Great Lakes region. I would like to ask Mr. Fall about efforts to implement the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region. When does he expect the Pact to be fully implemented? And what are the impediments that are blocking its implementation?

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of South Africa.

South Africa joins other members of the Security Council in congratulating Mr. Fall on his commitment to the efforts to bring about peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region. South Africa is truly honoured by the kind of service he has given to the Great Lakes region and to Africa as a whole throughout his service to the United Nations.

We also take this opportunity to pay tribute to Mr. Fall's efforts in initiating, together with the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. We recall that the International Conference was initiated after decades of armed conflict and humanitarian disasters in the region, in particular the genocide in Rwanda and the conflicts in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We are pleased that we have recognized that development has a political meaning, encompassing security and stability, without which no sustainable development is possible. This recognition has brought a refreshing outlook to our understanding of peace in the Great Lakes region.

Today, the Great Lakes region in Africa is on the threshold of establishing lasting peace. There has been a reduction in both intra-State and inter-State conflicts. Even though we are still concerned about the negative forces that remain active, particularly in the eastern part of the Congo, tensions have been reduced.

Nonetheless, South Africa is pleased at the progress that has been made in countries such as Burundi, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which recently inaugurated a democratic Government. The region has continued to suffer from the lack of resources to help it meet developmental objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals. We are pleased that Mr. Fall's efforts have contributed immensely to addressing the critical and sensitive issue of plundering national and natural resources in the region.

The region is also experiencing increased political dialogue and collaboration in the resolution of conflicts and towards post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding. There is now a chance that we may be witnessing a new direction towards peace, stability and development in the Great Lakes region.

In this regard, the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region signed by countries of the region is significant because it creates a positive environment for sustainable development. The fact that it allows the leaders of the region to meet regularly is, in itself, very positive, indeed.

South Africa is privileged to have been part of the process leading to the convening of the International Conference. We remain committed to assisting the region in effectively addressing the objectives that remain on the transitional agenda. Today, we look back with pride and with hope for an African renaissance in the Great Lakes region.

I thank Mr. Fall very much for his service.

I now resume my function as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ibrahima Fall to respond to comments and questions that were raised.

Mr. Fall: First of all, Mr. President, I would like to thank you for the appreciation expressed by you and your colleagues in the Security Council for the work done by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region. I will convey those congratulations to my colleagues, as well as to the other part of the joint secretariat, which is the African Union (AU).

I am sure that the debate that has just taken place will contribute immensely to helping the countries realize the importance for them to work very quickly for the speedy ratification of the Pact and for its full implementation.

Questions were raised about good governance and the fight against corruption. I must say that from the beginning the issue of bad governance — lack of democracy — has been central to the discussions that led, first, to the adoption by the Dar es-Salaam summit of the Dar es-Salaam Declaration, which underlines the importance of lack of democracy and lack of good governance as factors that explain the conflicts and wars that affected the region for the last decade. For that reason, the cluster on democracy and good governance is one of the most important within the Conference.

Several protocols and projects are dealing with the fight against lack of good governance and lack of democracy. They include the protocol on democracy and good governance, the protocol on judicial cooperation among the members of the Conference, the protocol on prevention of crimes against humanity, crimes of genocide and so on, and the protocol on illegal exploitation of natural resources. All these protocols are really focusing on the centrality of good governance and good democracy and on the fight against corruption as a pillar for the stabilization of the region.

Among the projects is the regional centre for democracy, good governance and human rights, and several forums that offer a framework through which women, youth and civil society regionally can meet regularly, discuss issues and put pressure on their Governments to respect democracy and good governance and to fight corruption.

Another question concerned the conditions for the Pact to be implemented and the obstacles to implementation. As for the first part of the question, according to the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes region, it is only when 8 of the 11 countries of the region have ratified the Pact that implementation will be enforced, 30 days after the last ratification. We proposed that because one had to find a balance between full ratification of the Pact by all 11 countries — which is what we expect — and, on the other hand, avoiding the fact that failure by one country to ratify the Pact would mean its not entering into force. So that was the balance between unanimity versus the right of veto of one country and the simple majority. We believe that if the commitments taken by both the heads of State and then the heads of parliaments are respected, the Pact could enter into force very soon.

Concerning the obstacles, these are somehow related to the bureaucracy of ratification, because so long as the treaty has not been duly ratified, there is no obligation for a Government to implement it. However, countries committed themselves during the Nairobi summit to doing their utmost not to affect their commitment to ratification.

I think that cooperation between the United Nations and the AU is central to the Pact's implementation framework, and the proposal to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council is critical.

I take this opportunity, once again, to underline the importance of the cooperation we have had with the African Union. This is the first time we have had a joint secretariat. It is not a decision taken by the United Nations or by the African Union, but it is a de facto decision that was taken by my Office and that of the African Union to call ourselves, together as family, a joint secretariat. I must also say that both the African Union Chairman, President Konaré, and its Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Said Djinnit, have been constantly involved in cooperative efforts towards the success of the Conference, as illustrated by the next meeting of the AU Peace and Security Council on the outcome of the Nairobi summit.

Of course, speakers in this morning's Council meeting have alluded to some concern in the region — in Darfur and in Uganda, and on the circulation of small arms and light weapons. As far as the negotiations in Juba between the LRA and the Government of Uganda are concerned, as this Security Council knows, President Chissano is currently visiting the region and talking to the interlocutors, and the Department of Political Affairs is happy to announce that President Chissano will brief the Security Council next week on the outcome of his démarche. Darfur, of course, is a very important concern. We believe that we have to combine the implementation of the Abuja Agreement and facing the humanitarian situation in Darfur. Lastly, but not least, on the subject of small arms and light weapons, I am glad to inform the Council that the European Parliamentarians for Africa (AWEPA) and the Congolese authorities are organizing a wide-ranging meeting in Brazzaville on 28 and 29 March 2007 to tackle this issue, especially within the Congo.

The role of the United Nations in the implementation has also been central to today's discussion. Beyond the political and diplomatic role of this Security Council, it is important that the United Nations be equipped to articulate a strategy to accompany the implementation of the Pact, both at the institutional and operational levels. I am glad to say that, even before the summit, within the Steering Committee, where all the United Nations agencies are represented in Nairobi, each agency was encouraged to articulate its own strategy and then come together to merge their different strategies into a whole United Nations system strategy to accompany the implementation of the Pact. The United Nations Development Programme has already finalized its regional strategy for the implementation of the Pact, and all the agencies are working on that issue.

The Group of Friends and the European Union have also been alluded to. I would like to take this opportunity to again underline the fundamental role that the Group of Friends has played during the whole process of preparing for the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. I have just returned from The Hague, where a few days ago the Group of Friends held a meeting devoted to how best to support the Conference secretariat and Ambassador Mulamula during the establishment of the secretariat and until June 2007. The Group of Friends should have met again by that time to consider its future as the Group of Friends for the Great Lakes region.

The European Union has also been actively involved, especially through Mr. Aldo Ajello, its Special Envoy to the Great Lakes region, and I would also like to take this opportunity to pay homage to him for his actions.

Last but not least, the issue of financial requirements for the implementation of the Pact has also been central to our discussions. I would like to take a symbolic approach. The cost of implementing projects and protocol in the context of the Conference on the Great Lakes Region is about $2 billion. That is a lot of money. And of course, the responsibility of the Governments of the region is pivotal — it is crucial. But the international community cannot hide behind that central responsibility and avoid its own responsibility. The $2 billion is important, but let me say that it represents about two years of the functioning of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As an African, I believe that the firefighter approach that the international community, including the United Nations, generally adopts by deploying peacekeeping forces is crucial — but it is not enough. It is better to prevent, it is better to reconstruct so as to prevent the resurgence of conflict. In that framework, $2 billion is not very important.

The President: I thank Mr. Fall for the clarifications that he has provided.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.